

## A STUDY ON IMPACT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN ON MARKETING IN SULTANATE OF OMAN

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### Abstract

Graphic design has turned one of the prominent types of both direct as well as indirect modes of communication. Ranging from marketing materials, business cards, advertising banners, infographics and other forms of promotional materials role of graphic design has become mandatory. The visual aspect of graphic design and its impact on marketing has got some attention on how they could strengthen brand communications and perceptions across Oman. The core purpose of this research paper is to assess the impact of graphic design on marketing with reference to brand communication and consumer response across Oman. A total of 50 respondents are being involved in the study to assess the impact that graphic design has been able to create on marketing interventions amongst the customers. Some of the variables include brand value, graphic design as well as their interaction with the customers. The core findings of this research intend to assess consumers who are linked to a brand product / service and how does graphic design influence attitude towards the product or service. Response from the survey highlight the driving factors behind use of graphic design as Ease of sharing, scope for assessing Return On Investment (ROI) respectively. Findings on Impact of graphic design on marketing have revealed that it enhances memorability of customers and consistency in marketing messages across all marketing channels.

**Key words:** Graphic design, Marketing, Brand Communication, Return on Investment (ROI)

### 1. Introduction:

Graphic design is also termed as communication design is defined as the process of developing and depicting ideas through the art of mixing text, pictures across books, brochures, images, magazines or any other forms of advertisements (Ang, 2014). The form of graphic design can be physical print or virtual images where in the visual experience for by the end user could take place in a short or long period of time. Graphic design and its purpose could also range from commercial, social, educational or political formats. A website or a printed marketing material with mere text is not that lucrative and would be highly complex to the end reader to follow (Olsen, 2016). Role of graphic design in marketing communication is gaining momentum as a result of the pressure that marketing professionals face in attracting and convincing attention of the customers towards a product or service (Bostic, 2014). Today most of the business in Oman invests a considerable amount of funds and time in designing their marketing communication materials through graphic design. Ultimately the challenge that prevails for both the business as well as the marketing experts is to make sure that their marketing communication is perceived valuable by the potential customers (Lawrence, 2014).

In reaction to the emerging drifts in graphic design, marketing scholars have been focusing on attracting customers through marketing communications in the globalized marketplace (Roberts, 2015). Amidst the role that graphic design has been playing in marketing communications and brand management, studies that evaluate the impact of graphic design on marketing communications is limited. This research tends to assess the role of graphic design on brand and marketing communications towards customer response (Wheeler, 2014).

In the context of marketing grabbing attention of target audience in short span of time is of at most importance. Flooding content in the market space is making it difficult for end customers to review an advertisement or a print media (Bawab, 2014). Hence it is essential for marketers to make sure that marketing materials are designed in an innovative way which can be easily understood and perceived by the readers in the right connotation. Graphic design offers the credit of presenting short and crisp messages through innovative design elements that ultimately gives audience excellent visual experience.

## **2. Structure of the study:**

The structure of the report on the study initiates by offering insight in to the background of the study through a short introduction followed by that of literature review on graphic design and its impact on marketing communications. Post the assessment of literature more insights are offered in evaluating the objectives of this report with clarity on the type of research methods that has been adopted in executing the study. The findings of the study are derived from the data that have been collected from target participants. The report concludes with listing of crucial findings and that of discussion over future research prospects on graphic design in marketing.

## **3. Literature Review**

Marketing is often mistaken for mere communication, promotion or advertising. To really understand the meaning of marketing, one has to start from understanding the overall goal of undertaking marketing activities. The word marketing could be defined as how well any product or service that has a value - both functional and aesthetic, or of any other nature - is promoted (Briggs, 2011).

In the present day dynamic and complex business environment, enterprises of different types started to emphasise the strategic importance of marketing communication, rather than seeing it as merely a tactical process of promoting the elements of marketing mix. Brands exist in the minds of customers not only through their experience of a product or service, but also because of long term effects of communication (Bose 2014).

The traditional marketing models fail to capture the complexity of contemporary consumer behaviour and so just studying cause and effect can never be a basis for making proactive business decision to meet the market and satisfy the customers. This situation has

forced the business enterprises of present day marketing world to think of established communication models, particularly those which picture communication as a magic bullet fired at the customer's mind to ensure compliance with marketing plans. Building and managing relationships with consumers and customers has a direct bearing on marketing communication. Hence, marketing communication helps define an organisation's relationships with customers not only the kind of messages exchanged, but also by the choice of media and occasion to suit their customers' preferences (Brown, 2012).

Although marketing communication can play a number of crucial roles, they must do so in an increasing environment. The present day technological revolution has changed drastically the way organisations present the information and the customers perceive the information. The rapid diffusion of powerful broadband internet connections, advertising-skipping digital video recorders, multipurpose mobile phones, and portable music and video players have forced marketers to rethink a number of their traditional practices (Kiley, 2010). These dramatic changes have necessitated the use of advanced method of digital technology in marketing activities. Communication effectiveness depends on how a message is being expressed. If the communication is ineffective, it may mean that wrong message was used or the right one was just poorly expressed. Creative strategies are the way marketers translate their message into a specific communication, which in turn needs high end digital technology such as graphic design (Chakravarthi, 2013)

#### **Factors driving use of graphic design in marketing:**

Eskilson (2012)states that graphic design and its journey with marketing communication is long as it initiates from creating the first impression and goes through converting customers for long term relationship with that of the organization. The benefits reaped by organizations through adoption of graphic design can both be tangible and intangible. Roberts (2015) in his studies has highlighted some of the most crucial business purposes that firms intend to achieve as a result of using graphic design in their marketing materials discussed as follows.

##### **1. Grab attention of readers:**

One of the primary driving factors that drive marketers to make use of graphic design is its ability to grab the attention of target customers. Either it is banner marketing or digital marketing a good design in graphic will help marketing teams to capture attention of customers (Ryan, 2014).

##### **2. Increases sales:**

Gaining access to more customers will result in more revenues for the firm. Organizations make sure they incorporate graphic design in their marketing communications with the ultimate objective of increasing sales of product or service (Richardson, 2015).

**3. Acts as a strong identity for business:**

Graphic design is widely used in designing of logo, business cards and other company identity materials. This identity act as indirect marketing agents and in turn creates a strong identity for business amongst the target customers (Roberts, 2015).

**4. Easy to share virally:**

The number of digital marketing interventions in Oman has gained momentum post the penetration of 3G and Smartphone devices. The use of graphic design in web design and content marketing interventions are increasing. (Hemann (2013) states the business benefit of graphic design to aid marketers share the designs in digital format there by encouraging the customers to.

**5. Enhanced market positioning:**

Marketing positioning is linked with that of portraying a product or service in a unique way as to differentiate itself from rest of the players in the market. Through graphic design marketers are able to compare and contrast features of product and list real time facts (Olsen, 2016).

**6. Reduced time to market more products and increased ROI:**

Even though the time taken by the graphic designers to create a marketing material is high, the increased share ability of digital images and videos across social media platforms makes it easier for firms to reach more customers with minimal marketing efforts (Flores, 2013). Further the cost of designing and the reach to audience in digital media can be traced quantitatively which promotes assessment of return on investment made in marketing.

**Impact of graphic design in marketing**

Graphic design is a tool that is widely used nowadays to drive marketing efforts there by attracting customers towards the brand. Graphic design is treated as an important opportunity for advertisers for communicating the product or service in a visual format thereby positioning the product in a better way than that of the competitors in the market (Wallace, 2016). When it comes to marketing the design can influence the look, ambience, functionality as well as the message which a company intends to convey. More over graphic design is said to have a strong bonding with marketing as it is capable of portraying what a product or service brand would look like right from the design of logo to that of the website design. When it comes to marketing communications there are 7 important factors that gets influenced by graphic design (Wheeler, 2014).

Figure 1 - Factors influenced by graphic design



Consistency is one of the most important factors in graphic design as designs are being shared across multiple marketing channels. The fit of graphic design in to that of the overall design of the marketing material plays an important role (Roberts, 2015).

Packaging - Use of graphic design in packaging and other forms of print media has an ability to showcase tangibility of product to the customers.

Authority - When graphic design is done with no compromises on quality it lays the foundation for persuasive communication there by aiding the company portray itself as an authority in the market segment (Dev, 2012).

Tone- Marketing communications could be from professional fun based one to that of serious communications and this variance can only be brought through graphic design.

Graphic design is capable of projecting a product or service with the one with multiple features or could highlight the unique functionality of the product. Thus graphic design can be highly customer and product centric (Roberts, 2015).

Relevancy is one amongst the most crucial credit that can be attained through graphic design. If proper attention is not offered to graphic design it might distract customers from intended marketing communication of the firm. The impact that graphic design cans instil in the mind set of customers can be high. Effective graphic design does not fail to impress the customers there by fostering memorability amongst customers (Hemann, 2015).

#### Graphic design and consumer behaviour

Graphic design across marketing materials interacts with the customers synonymously and it influences the consumer behaviour. Bostic (2014) states important variables that are capable of influencing the purchase decision or the customers post reviewing a graphic design marketing material. According to Olsen (2016), the perception of customers when offered with graphic design can range across 6 important ingredients.

Figure-2 Graphic design and consumer behaviour



(Olsen, 2016)

These comprise the perception of customers that graphic design increases their urge to buy product or service in the marketing material, being excited after seeing the design, getting convinced on a product or service in an advertisement, a fact that it compels the buyer to get the product or service and after all it also synchs the value or theme of the product (Ryan, 2014). Most importantly graphic design in the online context encourages the customers to share the design or infographics to their close networks which increases the reach of the marketing campaign.

#### Graphic design and marketing in Oman

Currently the media landscape in Oman is taking up a radical shift, and this can be listed in 2 words as Digital First. The transition is bringing about lot of changes in the dynamics of Social Media marketing, Newspapers, Magazine and other forms of marketing communication across Oman.

The shift in rules is equally changing the norms in advertising and marketing there by making new choice of designs (Hemann, 2013). Earlier marketing communications were reliant only on newspapers and currently the social media platforms have demanded the intervention of graphic design in marketing communication across Oman. Especially on the online perspective graphic design is being used to execute visual marketing through an array of graphic aspects such as infographics, videos, mailers and animations respectively. With so much of competition amongst the firms in Oman, graphic design seems to an effective marketing tool which helps marketers to directly communicate with the customers (Lloyd, 2014).

#### 4. Objectives of the study

Researchers have stated that graphic design have turned source for making brand associations and are being used widely across medias such as banners, stationery,

packaging, online marketing (Ryan, 2014). Equally graphic design and its usage are costly as it grabs more time as well as money for the organization. In addition to this, organizations across Oman are considering graphic design as most common ingredient in the marketing mix there by using it for their marketing communications.

The research study from Berlyne (2003) states that design is most commonly generalized across an array of stimuli's such as symbol, image as well as objects. On the other hand, graphic design must be linked to that of visually linked marketing elements namely packaging, advertising etc. The research explores link between graphic designs to that of responses that it evokes across the potential end customers and to provide effective guidelines on use of graphic design in marketing interventions (Olsen, 2016).

The research questions derived for the study, based upon the literature review, are as follows:

- What are the factors that drive graphic design in marketing communications for firms across Oman?
- How effective is graphic design in influencing marketing interventions and how does it influence consumer behaviour in Oman?
- What is the response of the customers in Oman to that of graphic design?

Based on the 3 important research questions, the following objectives are formulated for the study.

- To examine what drives firms adopt graphic design in marketing communication across Oman.
- To what extent is graphic design impacting marketing interventions and consumer behaviour.
- To investigate the impact of graphic design from customers perspective in Oman.

## 5. Research methodology

The present research study is descriptive and of exploratory in nature based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected by employing questionnaire method on random sampling strategy. For the purpose of collecting primary data, a sample size of 50 respondents were chosen consisting of 25 respondents who are working in marketing department of various business enterprises across Muscat. Another set of 25 respondents were also drawn for the study who are customers of different products and services. The researchers took enough care to ensure that the samples selected for the study are representative in nature so that the findings could be generalised.

Besides primary sources of data, the researchers have extensively used secondary data made available from research studies, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, text books, website, etc. The data collected were analysed by using simple percentage method so as to draw inferences.

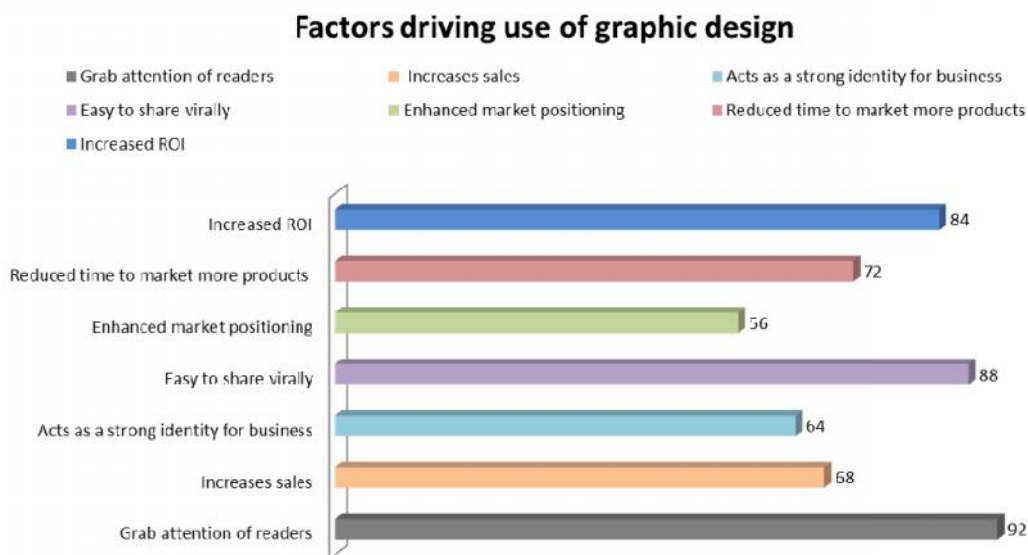
## 6. Analysis, Discussion and Findings from the research

### 6.1 Factors driving use of graphic design

Table 1 - Showing factors driving the use of graphic design

Sl.No	Factors driving use of graphic design	Frequency	Percentage of responses
1	Grab attention of readers	23	92
2	Increases sales	17	68
3	Acts as a strong identity for business	16	64
4	Easy to share virally	22	88
5	Enhanced market positioning	14	56
6	Reduced time to market more products	18	72
7	Increased ROI	21	84
Total Number of respondents = 25			

Figure 3 - Showing factors driving the use of graphic design



The response of 25 executives working as marketing executives and marketing consultants reflects the factors that drive the use of graphic design in marketing communication across Oman. The findings list the fact that graphic design is capable of getting instant attention and response from the audience to a great extent as its reflects 92% of the responses. Since graphic design is capable of portraying crucial facts with figures customers are able to give their attention to particular marketing communications being made of graphic designs. Further, results state that organizations across Oman prefer graphic design in marketing due to the ease of promoting viral sharing as its reflects in 88%



of the responses. The emergency digital marketing campaigns in Oman might be an important factor leading to this perception amongst the marketing consultants and executives. On the business context, yet another driving factor to use graphic design in marketing has been stated as its ease of evaluating the return on investment made in design 84%. Contrasting this with literature it is true that graphic design based images across digital medium is tracked for its share and clicks with the use of digital media metrics and analytics. Equally the share factors has also reflected in the response of the executives stating that graphic design enhances quick reach of message to the audience 72%. The least number of responses towards ability of graphic design in helping market positioning of a product reveals that there is a diminishing strategic link between market mix and that of graphic design in marketing across Oman. On an average of 68% of the response do reflected the fact that prime intention of organizations in Oman to use graphic design in marketing has been its assistance to increase sales.

## 6.2 Impact of graphic design over marketing

**Table 2- Impact of graphic design over marketing**

Sl.No	Impact of graphic design over marketing	Frequency	Percentage of responses
1	Promotes consistency across marketing channels	22	88
2	Helps to bring tangibility in packaging	17	68
3	Promotes tone of the message to be communicated	21	84
4	Increases memorability amongst customers	24	96
5	Increases relevancy between message and material	15	60
Total Number of respondents = 25			

The second research question is linked with that of evaluating the graphic design impact over the marketing communications. The response from 25 marketing executives and consultants showcase that majority of the respondents 96% agree on the ability of graphic design to increase memorability of the marketing message amongst customers. Additionally, 88% of the respondents stated that it promotes consistency in marketing across all the channels. Bringing about a uniformity in communication message forms an important attribute in graphic designing. Further the tone of message being communicate to the target audience is enhanced when it is done through graphic design 84%. Apart from the major percentages few of the respondents perceive that graphic design can foster tangibility and also pave way for relevancy between message and marketing material.

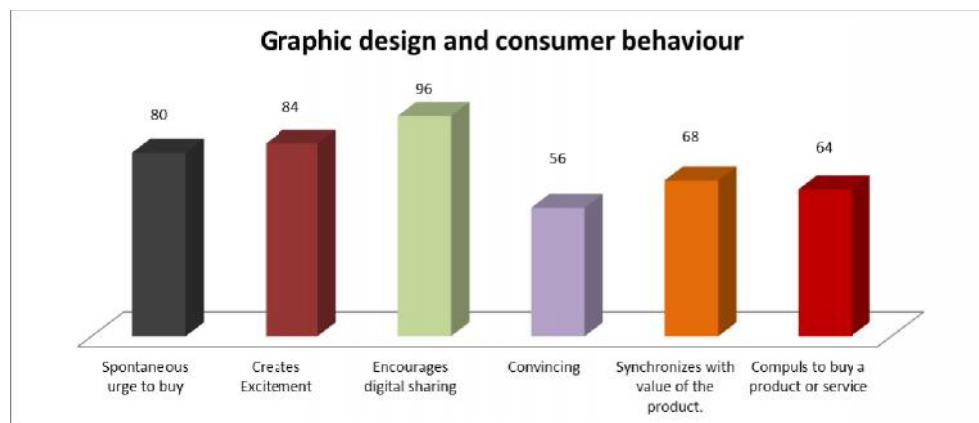
## 6.3 Graphic design and consumer behaviour

The third important research question of this study is linked with that of evaluating the perception of the target customers who are exposed to graphic design marketing materials.

Table 4- Graphic design and consumer behaviour

Sl.No	Graphic design and consumer behaviour	Frequency	Percentage of responses
1	Spontaneous urge to buy	20	80
2	Creates Excitement	21	84
3	Encourages digital sharing	24	96
4	Convincing	14	56
5	Synchronizes with value of the product	17	68
6	Compels to buy a product or service	16	64
	Total Number of respondents = 25		

Figure2- Graphic design and consumer behaviour



The response of 25 customers across Oman states a strong interdependency in response with the executives on graphic design. 96% of the responses showcase the perception of customers that Graphic design based marketing materials is easy to share in the digital context. Further, the impact that graphic design creates on marketing in the customer context is that of creating the excitement factor. 84% of responses favour the excitement quotient and 80% of the response lists the fact that customers are motivated to buy the product or service mentioned in the marketing communication.

These responses undoubtedly synchronize with the characteristic of graphic design to create a sense of buzz amongst the customers which is the very first essential for a successful marketing campaign. Least number of response states that graphic design is capable of convincing customers to buy 56%. Neither most customers feel that they are not compelled to buy a product through graphic design nor the graphic design is Synchronizing with value of the product. On the whole the customer perceptions state the ability of to create a sense of attention amongst the customers and also the transition to digital

marketing has made the job easier for customers to refer the product or service to their close networks.

## **7. Conclusion**

The research that has been executed amongst 25 marketing professionals and 25 customers has helped to attain conclusions to the research questions. Firstly, the evaluation of survey response has depicted the drivers of graphic design across organizations in Oman to be the ability of the graphic design to gain attention of more readers. Findings also highlight the reduced time in marketing to huge population across Oman through graphic design by marketers. Ease of sharing, scope for assessing Return on Investment (ROI) adds up to the list of forces that has been driving the adoption of graphic design in marketing. Secondly, impact of graphic design on marketing has been in increasing the memorability of customers and in ensuring that consistency is brought across all marketing channels. Lastly, the assessment of the consumer response across Oman has portrayed the massive impact of graphic design in increasing their urge to buy a product and most importantly it paves way for word of mouth across the target audience. Hence it could be concluded that the modern day marketing scenario is best aided by the use of graphic design in both offline and online marketing across Oman. The benefits that the marketers gain through the use of graphic design is massive provided the right design is used at the right time.

## **8. Limitations and direction for future research**

The research has been executed across limited marketing executives and customers across Oman due to high limitation in time. Another limitation has been the access to high financial resources which could have made this study more interesting by contrasting impact of graphic design across online and offline marketing context. Further, no focus has been offered on evaluating how infographics is creating a revolution in content marketing which is a part of the graphic design today which can be a strong basis for further research in this regard.

Since there has been limited number of variables used in the study the scope for adaptation of statistical tools and techniques such as correlation and regression is restricted in this study. Thus future research must be executed on large scale across GCC countries with scope for application of SPSS which can explore the interdependency between variables influencing the impact of graphic design in modern day marketing. Exploring the scope for future research, the current study has been confined only to limited target audience. Hence the future research must take in to account extended studies which will not only cover the impact of graphic design in marketing but also across other variables such as brand variables and word of mouth communications.

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